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Communist Psychological Warfare



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The Free World will make important progress in meeting the Communists' threat if we understand the techniques by which they sell an illogical philosophy and if we comprehend that the cold-hot alternation is but one of the major tools in their long-range strategy conflict.

THERE are many disquieting indications that the Communists may have developed, or stumbled upon, an all-inclusive or a totalitarian doctrine of psychological warfare.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of Communist propaganda is how dull and unconvincing it is. Its arguments are not logically persuasive, and their presentation is commonly repellent and unattractive. Nevertheless, Communism has been able to achieve considerable successes, even in the intellectual domain.

This anomaly may have explanation in the circumstance that the Communists do not at all aim to persuade the mind. Instead they seem to be orienting the *souls* of their audience.

If we accept this as our first hypothesis, we should assume next that the techniques of soul surgery should become clearest in situations where they are easiest to apply. Hence, instead of looking for such techniques in the field of international diplomacy, we should expect that Communist psychological-warfare techniques are revealed most dramatically in the indoctrination of party members and in the activities commonly called "brainwashing" or "brain changing." The treatment of war and political prisoners, including party members, of young party recruits, and of captive populations may give more valuable hints about the Communists' secret doctrine of psychological warfare than their purely verbal efforts in so-called propaganda campaigns.



Communists hold that behavior can be manipulated through the conditioning of reflexes.

"Educating" the Party Worker

Fundamentally, Communists hold that behavior, especially the behavior of groups, classes, and nations, can be manipulated through the conditioning of reflexes. To a large extent, this theory underlies Soviet propaganda, especially

its insistence on monotonous repetition and its capture of symbolic words which, so to speak, "ring a bell." (As usual in the case of "planners," it is not specified how the planners are planned, or how the human "conditioners" can be conditioned. It can be deduced from the omission that Communists assume their own elite's freedom from the conditioned reflex mechanism.)

The Communists have learned a great deal about the inter-relationships between physiology and psychology. This knowledge allows them, in their domestic and intraparty operations, to influence behavior through proper regulation of work, food, and leisure. In other words, they approach the mind through the body. The Communists appear to be consciously employing methods for inducing psychological disturbances in living organisms. By deliberate manipulation of stimuli, the desire for independent action, or the "freedom urge," is weakened or extinguished and neurotic behavior induced.

The artificial creation of insanity—a device which the Communists have applied to their prisoners by subjecting them to various forms of "invisible torture" such as uncertainty, fear, sleeplessness, strong light effects, and kneeling or standing—may not lend itself to the treatment of large numbers of people. However, unpredictable behavior, the acceleration and calming of disturbances and crises, alternations between smiles and growls, i.e., variable creations and releases of fear, and the maintenance of tension in perpetuity may induce quasi-neurotic behavior, increase the values of the "signal," and facilitate the acceptance of new word-signals. By interfering with family life and placing major emphasis on public education of infants, the father image is vested in an external and non-human entity, the state, or the party. This method of rearing children probably induces them to become more submissive to higher authority; it undoubtedly aims at restricting the sphere of private life and conceivably alters the emotional structure.

The Soviets make sure that the human herd obeys the "signals" of authority, while individual consciousness, emotionality, and initiative remain underdeveloped. Relegation of sex and other types of affection to minor and regressive roles is expected to induce "sublimation" through productive work and party chores. This particular technique is employed to transform human beings into mere cogs within a gigantic machine.

The Communists adopted, although not for curative purposes, the basic techniques of psychoanalysis, in particular the psychoanalytic interview. The psychoanalytic interview between physician and patient obviously would be impractical if patients were to be treated in large numbers. Hence the Communists have developed more streamlined methods that allow the mass production, not of cures, but of "complexes" and "traumas." These techniques include the compulsory writing of diaries, autobiographies, and histories of one's thought development; of oral interviews with party members; of hearings before organizational and ideological commissions and the political police; and of public "confessions."

These interviews, frequently repeated, inculcate in the "patient" feelings of error, guilt, shame, and fear, as well as desires for repentance and revenge—and provide the party with powerful levers of blackmail. This process aims to weaken the patient's conscience, to increase his will to obey and believe, stimulate his survival instincts, and augment his pliability for party purposes.

Whenever the Communists succeed in convincing people that they are a sort of incarnation of humanity's social conscience and that they are history's



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The "streamlined" method of psychoanalytic instruction includes oral interviews with party members, organizational hearings, public "confessions,"

anointed arbiters of any action undertaken by non-Communists, a person will tend to be apologetic about any doubts he harbors concerning Communism. Opposition to or deviation from Communism is tantamount to a negation of mankind's loftiest ideals and of mankind's inevitable future.

The Communists try to exploit, negatively and positively, a person's relationship to communities such as his family. In this connection they have adopted or reinvented, in their own fashion, the inferiority complex and the power urge. They evoke in the "patient" various feelings of insufficiency, thus hoping to stimulate him into compensatory action that would satisfy his power cravings and those of the party.

While the therapist seeks to eliminate the sources of trouble, the Communist psychological manipulator works toward the destruction of the self-reliant personality. To employ modern terms, he tries his hand at "brainwashing." Once this operation has been completed, a supplementary activity, "brain changing," must be undertaken. The brain is emptied of mundane thoughts, while simultaneously and wherever possible the body is weakened and the sensuous drives are subdued by fatigue, hunger, deprivation, and anguish. The mind enters a state of receptivity and exaltation. At this point, thoughts, ideas, symbols, and emotions—in short, "visions"—are put into the cleansed mind. The "patient"—who may be a member of a Western Communist party or a student at a party "university"—is invited to learn by rote some of the basic texts of the Communist literature. He is asked to write down the various thoughts he considers right, and to apply the doctrine to current and concrete issues. He may even be asked to participate in conspiratorial activities and to commit himself through acts of immorality, which may range all of the way from informing and spying to the betrayal of one's parents, from leading a lynching party to straight murder. The propositions of the doctrine must be attached to the person by extreme emotions. Wherever possible, this process is eased by public discussions, such as "democratic criticism," confession, trials, etc., which may induce trance or, conversely, "hardening" of the soul.

The Communists extensively employ hypnotic and suggestive techniques. The student is urged to tell himself, often by mechanical repetition, that he is becoming a better Communist, that he is cutting himself loose from all the black shadows of the past, and that he desires to sacrifice himself to the cause. The "patients" themselves, while learning and acquiring the proper reflexes, must also produce the signals to which they themselves and others must react. The insistence on parrot-like repetition is designed to harden the conditioned reflexes, to maintain a system of mutual suggestion or hypnosis, and to "fix" the desired complexes.

A nation is more likely to win in conflict if it considers its cause to be just. While the attempt by a nation's leaders, during a conflict, to endow their cause with righteousness is not new, the Communists push this to the limit. The purpose is to inculcate into the Free World guilt feelings about resistance to Communism and at the same time immunize the "Soviet peoples" with a sort of ideological vaccination against any notion that Communist wars or even aggressions may be something less than emanations of an exalted sense of justice. The Free World has been infected to some degree by bad conscience and guilt feelings. Hence, partly at least, the often surprising paralysis of democratic will.

The social universe is broken down into such opposing relationships as class and strata, exploiter and exploited, class-conscious Communism and

backward elements, "comrade" and enemy, organization and inert forces, etc. The craving for justice is monopolized in the sense that, according to the suggestion, only the Communists ever can really satisfy it. Communism, to put it differently, is both a myth that fulfills the eternal human requirement for myths, and a myth that satisfies the concrete needs of orientation—it gives direction and purpose to a man's daily chores.

Communist Surrogates for Religion

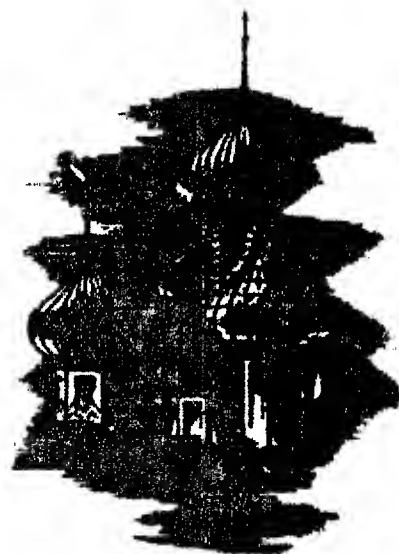
The Communist drive against religion assumes particular importance. In their attempts to undermine hostile societies, the Communists make every effort to destroy religious, ethical, and other higher motivations. They hope, thereby, that the preoccupation with immediate, mundane, material and private interests and the destruction of spiritual reserves will create frustrations and "atomize" society.

As religious beliefs wane, the number of possible recruits for Communism tends to increase. This is so not only because there is a mechanical relationship between Communism and atheism, but, also, more significantly, because the human hunger for redemption and assurance must be stilled and because the ingrained desire for a god craves satisfaction. Communism redeems on earth and proclaims man to be "god." The revolution is seen as the crucial "religious" event that transforms man from the object into the subject of history, i.e., into the creator of the perfect society.

The Communists' most powerful weapon in their onslaught on religion is social criticism addressed to situations of economic hardship, oppression, racial tension, delinquency, family trouble, and to shortcomings of religious organizations. The purpose of social criticism is to produce frustration-consciousness and persuade people that they cannot take such frustrations in their stride, let alone sublimate them by religious abnegation and hope for a hereafter. Instead they must overcome them by revolutionary and violent action, and by active sacrifice. Frustration, let us note, is a forerunner of aggressiveness, especially if aggressive impulses can be stimulated artificially.

The Communists must find for the societies under their rule a substitute for religion as a foundation of mental health. They cannot adopt religion, certainly not openly, because this would sensitize human conscience and thus undermine the foundations of their state and their world movement. Neither can they condone hedonistic tendencies or any objective, probabilistic, open-minded and multi-valued thinking that would jeopardize their dogmatic ideology and, most significantly in our context, preclude the effective application of psychological warfare, Communist style. Their obvious solution is, first, to peddle the pseudo-religion of materialistic Communism; second, to retain the aspects of religions: faith, brotherhood, initiation, salvation, redemption, grace, paradise, consecration, guilt, sin, sacrifice, atonement, asceticism—all of which have their counterparts in the Communist ideology; and third, to be excessively dogmatic about it all.

Communist dogmatism knows of saints and devils, incantations, indites of forbidden books, self-chastisement, anathemas upon heretics, ritualism, exegesis, apologetics, mysticism and talmudism (but not of a wailing wall for the leaders in power). This quasi-religiousness is at the bottom of the various psychoanalytic and hypnotic techniques which, without this "spiritual" foundation, probably would not "take."



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There is still another way of looking at this. To the extent that Communism embraces a materialistic or atheistic cosmogony, it is religion. It answers one of the basic human questions by pointing to matter, the laws of nature, and accident as the causes and meaning of the universe and, by implication, to true death and extinction as the future. Communism admits the existence of a higher power, but it assumes that power—or force—to be blind and non-personal. Thus, it purges religion of the concept of a higher power which is purposive, and it rejects the notion of a higher power that has revealed its purposes in terms understandable by humans. It accepts the idea that higher forces are intervening in human lives, but it assumes this intervention to be entirely accidental and meaningless. Thus, it postulates that "science" may give man a capability to influence the higher forces, nay, to dominate them, but it rejects any idea of a personal relationship of man with God.

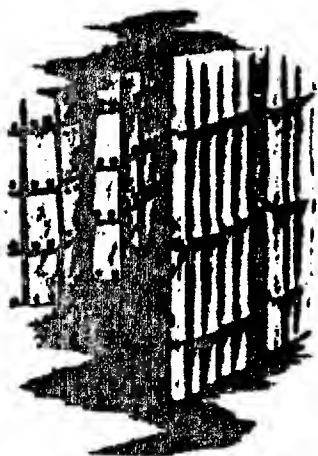
The dictator becomes god, the only god for that matter; and the party becomes the church. As a variant, collective leadership becomes a sort of Trinity. The central committee and the local leaders take care of polytheistic needs. The parallels could be pressed further. The point is that all the essential elements of religion except the Virgin Mother complex are represented.

Communist Sociological Assumptions

Fear is frequently a cause of human difficulty; it diminishes survival capabilities of all kinds; and it is the disintegrating factor *par excellence*. This, of course, is not a new discovery. It is not surprising that the Communists always have laid great stress on terror, violence, and purges, and nowadays have enlisted the specter of nuclear war in their strategy of terror. They usually obtain good results from military threats and movements, and from giving the impression that they are willing to go beyond the "brink of war." The "specter" of Communism now is in the nature of a ghost in the closet. The specter that really haunts the world is that of a technological monster heavily armed with nuclei and bacilli and propelled by jets and rockets.

However, the Communists have added an improvement to the age-old art of inducing fright. Once a phenomenon is understood and its behavior has become predictable, men no longer fear it. A danger that is perceived clearly may become a stimulant for action—a most unwelcome possibility. Consequently, the Communists have adopted the techniques of erecting impenetrable "curtains" and of acting unpredictably and capriciously. They alternate smiles with growls, arrest the innocent and free the guilty, keep prisoners in captivity beyond their terms but release them at any odd moment. In general they show themselves impervious to reasonable argument and immovable by counsels of moderation. Deliberately, the impression is being created that one never can know what is going to happen next; even if everything is calm now, the next disturbance may be of unparalleled violence.

"Frequency modulation" in diplomacy is designed to dislocate a nation's fortitude. The technique is patterned after Hitler's pioneering attempts during 1936-1939. The ups and downs from expectations of "peace in our generation" to fears of total war, and the frequent rearrangements between business as usual and war preparedness made rational decision-making quite impossible. Although in 1939 the decision was finally made for resistance, the Communists apparently expect that in the future the democratic decision will be against nuclear war. The peace-above-all theme, punctuated and made convincing by war scares, is designed to kill the national conscience.



The Communists have invented the impenetrable "curtain" as an improvement to the age-old art of inducing fright.

Communist Crowd Psychology

The Communists have discovered that crowds are not formed just by direct physical contacts among a mass of people, such as in meetings or demonstrations. Instead, crowd attitudes can be created among people who are physically isolated. It is merely necessary to arouse excessive fears, exploit a calamity, stimulate a panicky attitude, give signals for action against scapegoats or for actions with a symbolic character, and keep the majority of the population paralyzed. One of the great objectives is to induce in all hostile groups the attitude of no-will.

"There are no isolationist Communists."

—from "A New Economic Strategy," by Barbara Ward, Atlantic Monthly, February, 1959.

Communist Selection Process

The Communist techniques are particularly apparent in the selection of their party members. The process embodies essentially five aspects.

1—The candidate is requested to prepare extensive biographical accounts of himself and to repeat this literary effort several times for the purpose of revealing whatever personal weaknesses or strengths he might have.

2—The individual must show a capability of absorbing the Communist doctrine and at the same time eliminating non-Communist thoughts. This result is achieved by restricting his reading to approved Communist texts, by having him learn many of these by rote, and by keeping track, through diaries, of the person's intellectual development.

3—In accepting an individual into the party, and particularly into the apparatus, the Communists see to it that the party satisfies all his needs for community and personal life. The major needs are taken care of to such an extent that, even if the party member should lose faith, his personal attachments would keep him in the fold.

4—Great emphasis is placed on evoking in the member an emotional attachment to his "iron will." He must develop an image of self characterized by such ceaselessly repeated words as merciless, implacable, irreconcilable, ruthless, relentless, fearless, etc.

5—The party employs the member for many chores and tasks, gladly pushing him into ever more responsible and perilous assignments. It is on the basis of his behavior in tight situations, his initiative and drive as an "organizer," and his ability to instill class hatred in others, that the final evaluation of his capacity and reliability is made. These methods are strengthened considerably by more brutal forms of pressure such as the splitting up of families, keeping of hostages, involvement in criminal acts, and in general the incorporation into the party of the member's entire family, or, conversely, the encouragement of liaisons and marriages between party members.

Communist Communications Theory

Within these various efforts, the modern tool of radio has played a great role, although older tools such as newspapers, posters, and books have not been neglected. Inside the areas under Communist control, all audiences are captive. The radios are ubiquitous and noisy, and cannot be turned off. The purpose is to prevent independent thinking, to make sure that whatever message goes into a person's mind is of an approved and planned type, and to drown out all messages which interfere with the process of conditioning.

Radio also is used on a large scale in countries outside of the Iron Curtain. While the Communists find no captive audiences for their broadcasts, they have captured numerous listeners indirectly, by repeating a limited number

of slogans or symbols, provoking anti-Communist speakers into replies and arguments, proposing and opposing solutions, and making "news." Counter-propaganda, aimed at the Communists, if executed clumsily, may recruit followers into the Communist fold, simply because to refute it must pick up Communist points. The danger they must avoid is the silent treatment.

In their radio and conventional mass communications the Communists simplify and sloganize their messages, employ exaggerations, distortions, sensationalism, human-interest stories, and scapegoats, and slant the messages according to situation and target. They do not hesitate to use lies. They couch their message in an authoritative style, indicating that only they know the answers, while the non-Communists preach impractical solutions and, in addition, are inferior human beings.

Beyond this, the more or less conventional, though streamlined, propaganda technique, the Communists have developed three improvements:

1.—They make a distinction between agitation and propaganda, that is, they address themselves to concrete issues and cleavages, as well as to the more fundamental and enduring problems. They try to create, especially among the more intelligent audiences, an understanding of the Communist doctrine as such. At the same time they try to capitalize on the grievances and desires of any group, especially of the underprivileged type, which by force of circumstances is contemplating, or engaged in, some kind of rebellious action.

2.—Far from preaching one simple gospel, and addressing it to the mentally most advanced, they present many different teachings ranging all the way from pure Communism via crypto- and semi-Communism to "front doctrine" and even synthetic ideologies for such unlikely customers as nationalists, conservatives, liberals, and even anti-Communists. By and large, their best target among the educated and semi-educated is the frustrated intellectual whose scientific thought habits are under-developed. The ideal devotee of the Communist gospel is one who seeks certainty, is emotionally attached to a prejudice or a pre-established position, is unwilling to verify his preconceived notions, and has the wrong idea of objectivity.

3.—The Communists combine propaganda with organization. The propagation of their messages leads necessarily to the recruitment of additional members. The new members, in turn, must participate in the wider propagation of the faith.

The Communists make the most of treating all issues in only black and white or in either-or terms, without admitting the possibility of shading. The Communists employ this device in their "social criticism" of the imperfections of the free enterprise system. At the same time, the imperfections of the Soviet system can be glossed over by pointing out that the welfare of the masses is slowly increasing.

"Either-or" thinking, however, is less a device than an essential ingredient of Communist thought. The Communist thinks in simple alternatives, and only in them, such as friend-enemy, "who is not for me is against me," "one or the other system will win." Thinking in all-or-nothing terms ("all capitalists are . . .") is a variant of this pre-scientific mode of cogitating.

The Communists are adept at all kinds of romantic and sophistic chicanery. They point out that the originator of an unwelcome thought is a capitalist, a slave of capitalism or, in any event, not a proletarian and certainly not a class-conscious one. They artfully assign concrete reality to abstractions. Thus,



The Communists make the most of treating all issues in only black and white, or in either-or terms, without shading.

a "class" is treated as though it were an individual. The individual's reality is "determined" by his belonging to one or the other "class." The term, "capitalism," also is an abstraction, moreover, it is a generic term which covers many different economic systems.

Specific Goals of the Communist Effort

In summary it can be said that Communist psychological warfare aims at the following objectives:

- 1—The creation of a psychologically strong, obedient, disciplined, steadfast, and iron-willed leadership core which thinks and behaves in a certain way, in that way only, and in that way for a long time regardless of obstacles.
- 2—The creation of a larger group of oriented propagandists who spread Communist notions and are instrumental in creating and maintaining a suitable frame of reference imposed upon non-Communists.
- 3—The creation in both groups of a burning sense of hatred.
- 4—Docility, discipline, and controllability of subject populations which must be commanded by the unopposed will of the party leadership.
- 5—The creation, in the ruling, upper, and intellectual classes of non-Communist societies, of frustration, confusion, pessimism, guilt, fear, defeatism, hopelessness, and neurosis, of lack of will, in essence the psychological destruction of anti-Communist leadership.
- 6—The splitting of a society into many competing and mutually hostile groups and the sapping of the spirit of loyalty, community, mutual helpfulness, positive expectation, and willingness to take risks and to act.
- 7—The creation and stimulation of an all-pervading sense of fear and anxiety, whether it be fastened onto the dangers of nuclear war, or physical terror, or professional, social, and human ruin.
- 8—The capture of the time dimension in the sense that an expectation of cataclysm and no-progress under capitalism is established and paired with the affirmed expectation that the future belongs to Communism.
- 9—The promise of relief from all troubles by means of an infallible as well as inevitable solution.
- 10—The semantic domination of intellectual, emotional, and socio-political life as well as the semantic control of all political arguments.
- 11—The weakening and destruction of national consciences in the Free World and the inculcation of bad conscience about firm opposition to Communism and the ideals usurped and distorted by it.

In former times, the Communists perhaps had illusions about their ability to convince. They expected that the great majority of all peoples would become "proletarian" in status and conscience. With these early expectations gone, it seems that the Communists have adopted a more moderate but presumably more practical objective: simply to frustrate the anti-Communists.

The rationale of zigzag tactics is to cause the opponent to build up a defense against zig, and shortly before it becomes effective, to "annul" this defense (the term is Bulganin's) by performing a zag. Thus, the initiative is slated to remain in Communist hands. The West, it is hoped, never will reach its objective successfully. As a result of the Free World's near failures, the Communists achieve mental and psychological ascendancy; in particular they prove that the stronger will is theirs. The recipe is simple: fears, guilt neuroses, lack of will power, and disoriented minds for the democracies, and fearlessness